

Eastern District of California

MAY / JUN 2010

U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

By U.S. Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner

According to the U.S. Department of Justice's five-year strategic plan, the number one goal of the Department is to "prevent terrorism and promote the nation's security." A new National Security Strategy has just been issued, and a new Department of Justice strategic plan is currently being formulated in accordance with standard procedure. While there have been changes in the nature of the threat and changes in the U.S. Government's approach to the threat, there will be no changes to the prominence of this issue. Our #1 goal will remain the prevention of terrorism.

Terror Threats — Foreign and Domestic

The importance of this goal is as clear now as it has ever been. There were more terrorism-related federal arrests in 2009 than in any year since 9/11. Those arrests interrupted or prevented attacks on the New York City subway, a skyscraper in Dallas, and a federal office building in Illinois. Other arrests last year involved the Fort Hood shootings, the attempted bombing of a Northwest Airlines plane on Christmas Day, and a man who has pleaded guilty to facilitating the Mumbai terrorist attack. More recently, of course, the perpetrator of the attempted car bomb attack in Times Square was arrested. The threat of terrorism is not only of the internationally inspired variety. When Joe Stack flew a plane into an IRS building in Texas earlier this year, killing two and injuring many more, he reminded us that anti-government zealots, hate groups and others based in this country can pose a deadly threat as well.

EDCA's New National Security Section

The Department of Justice is well equipped to use the criminal justice system to prevent and prosecute threats to national security while observing the rule of law. This office has prosecuted a range of national security cases, from Earth Liberation Front members who plotted to destroy government buildings, to persons charged with smuggling defense materials to the Middle East, to persons who sent hoax anthrax mailings to officials and members of the public. To enhance our focus on national security, however, in May, I formed a new National Security Section. This unit, staffed by experienced prosecutors and an intelligence analyst, will ensure closer coordination with the Department's National Security Division in Washington and with our local law enforcement and intelligence partners.

Community Partnerships Prevent and Protect

The threat of terrorist attacks increasingly emanates from within our borders. Several of the persons arrested in connection with terrorist incidents in the past year have been American citizens or lawful residents, and one was an officer in the U.S. Army. As the new National Security Strategy observes, countering domestic radicalism involves not only effective law enforcement, but forthright engagement with families, communities and institutions in this diverse country, in order to build trust and help them to deter radicalization and assist in protecting the security of this country. While improving detection and enforcement, I remain committed to reaching out to all ethnic, religious and national communities within this district to forge a stronger partnership to protect national security.
